

morning of November 7th as the ship again crossed the Equator. On 9 November, a flight deck "cookout" was sponsored by the supply department as the entire crew enjoyed char-broiled steaks and basked in the equatorial sun. After mooring at 1330 on 16 December at Pier 12, Norfolk, her "round-the-world" cruise completed, post-deployment and holiday leave began, continuing through the first day of the year 1969.

Shortly thereafter, on 8 January 1969, she headed for the Jacksonville operating area where she served as the platform for carrier qualifications. On 24 January, *America* arrived at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard to begin a nine-month overhaul. Upon completion of the overhaul, the carrier conducted post-repair trials and operated locally off the Virginia capes. During one period of local operations, between 21 and 23 November 1969, *America* took part in carrier suitability tests for the Lockheed U-2R reconnaissance plane.

On 5 January 1970, the carrier departed the Norfolk area to commence a nine week cruise in the Guantanamo Bay operating area. From 15 to 21 February, *America* participated in Operation "SPRINGBOARD 70," the annual series of training exercises conducted in the Caribbean. The program was established to take advantage of good weather and the extensive modern training facilities, including targets of all kinds, which are available in order to achieve maximum training during the period. This exercise included submarine operations, air operations, and participation by the Marine Corps. At the completion of this testing and training, *America* departed the Guantanamo area to arrive at the Jacksonville area on 1 March in order to conduct carrier qualification landings with the various squadrons stationed in and around the Jacksonville/Cecil Field area.

*America* arrived at NOB, Norfolk, on 8 March, and remained there for approximately one month making last minute preparations for an eight-month deployment.

On 10 April 1970, with CVW-9 on board, *America* left Norfolk, and paused briefly in the Caribbean Sea for an operational readiness inspection before proceeding on a voyage that took her across the equator to Rio de Janeiro, round the Cape of Good Hope, across the Indian Ocean, into the Pacific Ocean and finally to Subic Bay in the Philippines.

On 26 May, *America* began its first day of special operations in

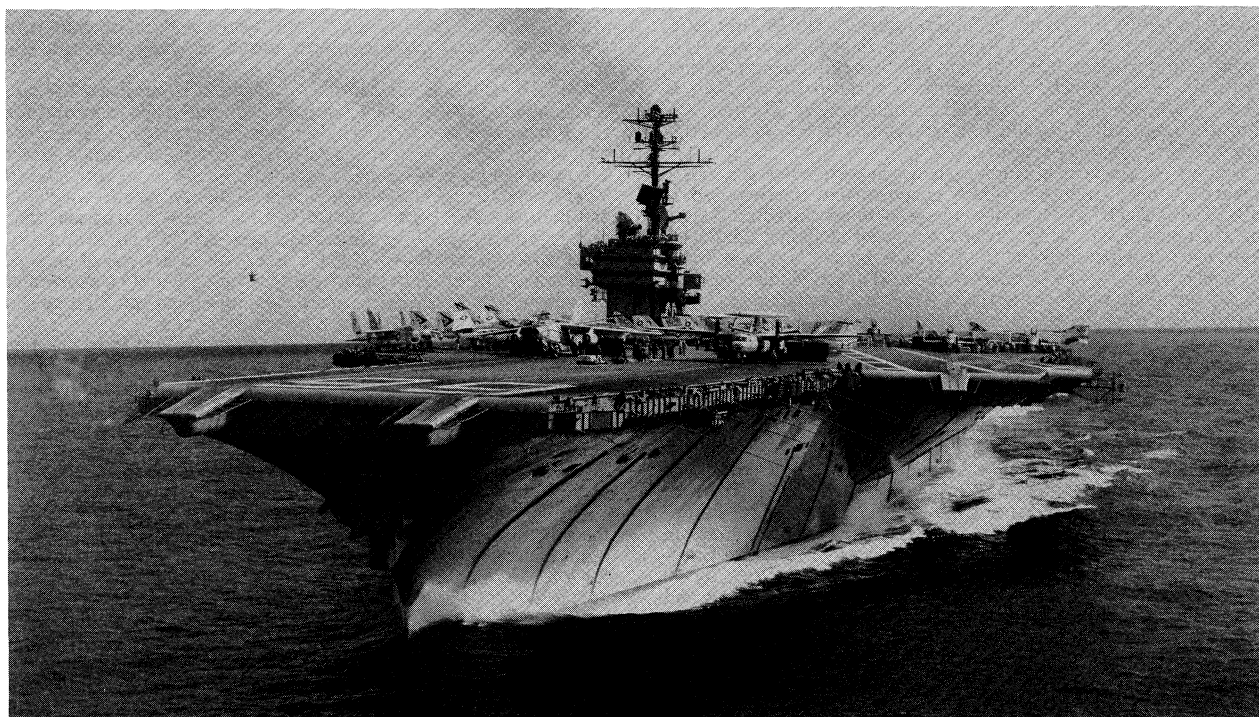
the Gulf of Tonkin, when Comdr. Fred M. Backman, commanding officer of VA-165, and his bombardier/navigator, Lt. Comdr. Jack Hawley, in a Grumman A-6C "Intruder" flew the ship's first combat sortie of the 1970 WestPac cruise. On the same day, the Navy's newest light attack aircraft, the A-7E Corsair II received its first taste of combat. At 1201, Lt. (j.g.) Dave Lichterman, of VA-146, was catapulted from the deck in the first A-7E ever to be launched in combat. He and his flight leader, Comdr. Wayne L. Stephens, the squadron's commanding officer, subsequently delivered their ordnance with devastating accuracy using the A-7E's digital weapons computer. Shortly after 1300, Comdr. R. N. Livingston, skipper of the "Argonauts" of VA-147, and Lt. Comdr. Tom Gravely rolled in on an enemy supply route to deliver the first bombs in combat in an A-7E, reportedly "all on target".

For five line periods, consisting of 100 days on "Yankee Station," *America*'s aircraft pounded at roads and waterways, trucks and waterborne logistic craft (WBLC), hammered at petroleum storage areas and truck parks in an attempt to impede the flow of men and war materials to the south.

On 20 August, at Manila, Vice Admiral Frederic A. Bardshar, Commander, Attack Carrier Striking Force, 7th Fleet, hosted the President of the Philippines, Ferdinand E. Marcos, on board *America*. President Marcos was given a 21-gun salute as he and Mrs. Marcos arrived on board from their Presidential yacht to visit the ship. Accompanied by American Ambassador and Mrs. Henry A. Byrde, they were greeted by Vice Admiral Bardshar and *America*'s commanding officer, Capt. Thomas B. Hayward, and were subsequently escorted to the ship's hangar deck where the carrier division band and the ship's marine detachment rendered honors. Following their arrival, the visiting party dined with Vice Admiral Bardshar and Capt. Hayward, and were later given a brief tour of the ship.

On 17 September, *America* completed her fourth line period and headed for special operations off the coast of Korea and, subsequently, the Sea of Japan. On 23 September the carrier entered the Tsushima Straits, remained in the Sea of Japan for approximately five days and exited on 27 September through the Tsugaru Strait.

During this period, *America* and CVW-9 engaged in three



*America* (CV-66), 14 May 1970. Note plane guard helicopter in right far background, an A-3 on the starboard catapult and an E-2C "Hawkeye" on the port. F-4 "Phantoms" sit poised on the port catapults. Photo taken by Photographer 3d Class L. J. Lafair. (USN-1145455)

exercises: "Blue Sky," with elements of the Chinese Air Force, from Taiwan; "Commando Tiger," conducted in the Sea of Japan, involving air units of the Republic of Korea (ROK) Air Force (ROKAF); and, after exiting the Tsugara Straits, "Autumn Flower," air defense exercises with the Japanese Air Self Defense Force (JASDF) and the United States Fifth Air Force.

On 7 November, *America* completed her fifth line period and departed for her last visit to Subic Bay. Through five line periods, the carrier had flown off 10,600 sorties (7,615 combat plus combat support), 2,626 actual combat sorties, completed 10,804 carrier landings, expended 11,190 tons of ordnance, moved 425,996 pounds of cargo, handled 6,890 packages and transferred 469,027 pounds of mail. She had accomplished this without a single combat loss and only one major landing accident with, fortunately, no fatalities. Considering sustained combat operations in prevailing immoderate weather and highly successful 7th Fleet exercises without one day's loss in operations due to any material casualty, *America* left the Pacific Ocean justifiably proud of her accomplishments.

On the long trip home, *America* welcomed approximately 500 more "pollywogs" into the realm of "Neptunus Rex." The day before the carrier arrived at Sydney, Australia, for a three day rest and recreation visit, United States ambassador to Australia and his wife, the Honorable and Mrs. Walter L. Rice, flew on board to accompany the ship into Sydney.

With so much to be thankful for, *America* celebrated two Thanksgivings. At exactly 2329 on November 26, *America* crossed the International Date Line. Moments later it became Thanksgiving Day again. On both days, crewmembers feasted on turkey, beef, lobster tails, Virginia ham, and roast duckling.

After rounding Cape Horn on 5 December 1970, *America* headed north, stopped briefly at Rio de Janeiro for fuel, and arrived at Pier 12, NOB Norfolk, on 21 December. She remained there until 22 January 1971, when the ship entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for a three month restricted availability. She departed the yard, on schedule, on 22 March. Over the ensuing weeks, the ship operated locally in the Virginia capes operating areas. She then carried out exercises in Puerto Rican waters, with United States Navy as well as Royal Navy warships—including HMS *Ark Royal* (R.09), HMS *Cleopatra* (F.28), and HMS *Bacchante* (F.69).

After a return to Norfolk, *America* stood out of Hampton Roads on 6 July 1971 for the Mediterranean. On 16 July 1971, *America* dropped anchor at Rota, Spain, in order to receive her turnover information from the ship she was relieving on station, *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. *America* then entered the Mediterranean for the third time since her commissioning. Between the time the ship left Rota, until she reached Naples, she participated in three major exercises.

Following a port call at Naples, *America* proceeded on a course toward Palma, Mallorca. While enroute, she participated in "PHIBLEX 2-71" in which she covered a mock amphibious landing at Capoteulada, Sicily. After a port visit at Palma, Mallorca, *America* participated from 16 to 27 August in "National Week X," one of the largest exercises conducted in the Mediterranean. At the termination of the exercise, *America* proceeded to Corfu, Greece, her next liberty port. She then visited Athens shortly thereafter.

After conducting routine operations in the eastern Mediterranean and making a port call at Rhodes, Greece, the ship proceeded to the Aegean Sea to participate in Operation "Deep Furrow 71," *America* and CVW-8 providing close air support for almost the entire exercise.

Proceeding thence to Thessaloniki, Greece, for a port visit, *America* then participated in "National Week XI," in the central Mediterranean. The carrier subsequently visited Naples before she steamed into the western Mediterranean to participate in exercises with British, Dutch, Italian and French forces in Exercise "Ile D'Or," completing her part in the evolutions by 19 November. *America* then conducted port visits to Cannes and Barcelona before proceeding to Rota. There, on 9 December, she was relieved on station by *John F. Kennedy* (CVA-67).

Arriving back at Norfolk on 16 December, *America* moored at Pier 12, NOB, Norfolk, for post-deployment standdown before unloading ammunition in preparation for availability at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. After the two-month overhaul, the carrier conducted sea trials. Soon thereafter, *America* embarked on a program of training, accelerated due to the fact that the date of her deployment had been advanced one month, and participated

in Exercise "Exotic Dancer V." She returned to Pier 12, NOB, Norfolk, upon conclusion of the exercises.

On 2 June 1972, three days before *America* was to sail, Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, the Chief of Naval Operations, visited the ship, and explained the reason why her orders had been changed sending her to the Gulf of Tonkin instead of the Mediterranean. Sailing on 5 June, *America* crossed the equator on 12 June and held the usual initiation of "pollywogs" into the realm of Neptune.

Escorted by *Davis* (DD-937) and *Dewey* (DD-937), and accompanied by the fleet oiler *Waccamaw* (AO-109), *America* proceeded toward southeast Asia, and rounded Cape Horn on 21 June. Joining the 7th Fleet later in June, *America* relieved the attack carrier *Coral Sea* (CVA-43) on station, and commenced combat operations on 12 July. A ruptured main feed pump, however, prompted an early return to Subic Bay on 25 July for repairs, the ship arriving in the Philippines during a time of natural devastation—floods and landslides.

The repair work was delayed for two weeks while needed parts were rushed to Subic Bay. *America* stood out on 9 August to return to the line, and soon resumed carrying out strike operations against communist targets in North Vietnam. On 6 October, bombs from her planes dropped the Thanh Hoa Bridge, a major objective since the bombing of the North had begun years before.

Completing her line period and stopping over briefly at Subic Bay, *America* steamed to Singapore, departing that port on 20 October to resume operations on "Yankee Station." Less than a month later, a fire broke out on board *America*, at 1410 on 19 November 1972, in the number two catapult spaces. The ship went to general quarters as smoke began to fill the 03 level, and damage control parties soon had the blaze extinguished. Clean-up and repair work ensued, and despite not having the services of one of her catapults, *America* remained on the line and continued to meet her commitments.

After an extended line period of 43 days, *America* reached Subic Bay on 2 December, where the number two catapult was repaired, and departed the Philippines on 8 December to return to "Yankee Station." A week before Christmas, *America* learned that the breakdown of peace talks in Paris had led to a resumption of bombing of targets in North Vietnam. *America* swung into action, and the pace proved hectic until the Christmas ceasefire. "Christmas away from home is never good," *America's* historian wrote, "but the men of *America* made the best of it with homemade decorations." There were services to celebrate the season, "and carolers were noted strolling through the passageways . . ."

On 28 December, the carrier anchored in Hong Kong harbor, and remained there until 4 January 1973, when she stood out for the Philippines and the period of rest and repairs at Subic Bay that would precede the ship's return to the line. All hands avidly followed the progress of the peace talks as *America* returned to "Yankee Station," and resumed operations. After two weeks on the line, the ship learned that peace had been secured and that an agreement was to be signed in Paris. At 0800 on 28 January 1973, the Vietnam War—at least that stage of it—was at an end. Rumors swept the ship that her deployment would be shortened because of the cessation of hostilities, and hope ran high as the ship moored at Subic Bay on 3 February.

*America* did return to "Yankee Station" one last time, but her time on station proved short, as she returned to Subic Bay on 17 February and sailed thence for the United States three days later, on 20 February 1973. The carrier arrived at Mayport, Fla., disembarking men from CVW-8 and embarking the teen-aged sons of some of the ship's company officers and men, thus allowing them to ride the ship back to Norfolk with their fathers, something thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part.

On 24 March 1973, *America* arrived back at NOB, Norfolk, mooring at Pier 12 and bringing to a close her sixth major deployment since commissioning. She immediately began preparations for a 30-day standdown and the restricted availability to follow at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. She entered the yard on 11 May, and emerged after that period of repairs and alterations on 10 August.

*America* conducted local operations out of Norfolk into October, and during this period the ship celebrated a significant milestone in the life of a carrier: she logged her 100,000th landing on 29 August 1973, when her COD aircraft (nicknamed "Miss *America*"), piloted by Lt. Comdr. Lewis R. Newby and Lt. Comdr. Ronnie B. Baker, landed on board. Cake-cuttings on the hangar deck and in the wardroom celebrated the occasion.

On 29 October, *America* cleared Hampton Roads for Jacksonville and a period of carrier qualifications. She was conducting routine training operations on 1 November 1973 when she went to the assistance of the crippled sailing schooner *Harry W. Adams* of Nova Scotia. The 147-foot schooner, her engine disabled and without power for her pumps, was taking on water. Helicopters from *America* sped to the scene, and the ship provided rescue specialists and underwater demolition experts to assist in the effort. The ship's captain and his crew of nine all escaped serious injury, although the carrier's helicopters brought three of the crew on board for medical examinations and a warm meal. *America* stood by until the late afternoon, when the Coast Guard cutter *Port Roberts* arrived to assist *Harry W. Adams* into port at Jacksonville.

After concluding her operations in the Jacksonville area, *America* paid a port call at Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., from 4 to 8 November. She proceeded thence to sea for exercises of various kinds to hone the skills of the ship-air wing team and, following her operational readiness inspection off Mayport, proceeded back to Norfolk, mooring at Pier 12, NOB, on 21 November.

*America* then steamed south after the Thanksgiving holiday, for Atlantic Fleet readiness exercises, returned via Mayport to Norfolk on 13 December, and remained in her home port until sailing for the Mediterranean on 3 January 1974.

Relieving *Independence* at Rota, Spain, on 11 January, she became the flagship for Rear Admiral Frederick C. Turner, Commander, TF 60. *America* commenced operations in the western Mediterranean that day and, over the next few weeks, divided her time between at-sea periods and port visits to Toulon, Barcelona, and Valencia. From 15 to 19 February, the carrier participated in Exercise "National Week XVI," and upon the conclusion of that evolution anchored in Souda Bay, Crete. She proceeded thence for a port call at Athens.

Standing out of the waters of that Greek port on 1 March, *America* participated in "PHIBLEX 9-74," in which the ship's air wing, CVW-8, practiced supporting an amphibious landing. The carrier then operated north of Crete on exercises in early April, after which time she put into Athens on 9 April.

*America* then participated in NATO exercise, "Dawn Patrol," in which units of the navies of the United States, United Kingdom, Portugal, Holland, France, Italy, and West Germany participated. During one phase of this exercise, the carrier's marine detachment embarked in *El Paso* (LKA-117) and stormed ashore from that amphibious ship while *America's* planes provided close air support.

Upon the conclusion of "Dawn Patrol," the carrier paid another visit to Athens, proceeding thence on 19 May for a four-day period of exercises, after which time she steamed to Istanbul, arriving there on 23 May.

Immediately following this port call, the ship returned to Athens and sailed thence for Exercise "SHAHAZ" to test the air defense capability of NATO ally Turkey early in June. *America* then anchored off the island of Rhodes, Greece, on 6 June for a four-day port visit, after which time she returned to Athens to embark Naval Academy midshipmen for their summer training cruise. *America* then participated in Exercise "Flaming Lance," off the coast of Sardinia, during which time *Leahy* (DLG-16) controlled over 1,000 intercepts by *America's* aircraft.

Making her last port call at Athens for the deployment, the carrier steamed to Souda Bay on 1 July, loading minesweeping equipment that had been used in Operation "Nimbus Star," the clearance of the Suez Canal. *America* then proceeded to Corfu, and began the transit out of the eastern Mediterranean on 6 July, arriving at Palma, Mallorca, three days later.

*America* anchored off Rota on 15 July, for what was scheduled to have been an off-load of the equipment of Commander, TF 60, staff. Clashes between Greek and Turkish forces on Cyprus, however, prompted the Joint Chiefs of Staff to order *America* to remain at Rota until the arrival of her relief, *Independence*, on 28 July. As soon as that attack carrier entered the 6th Fleet operating area, *America* commenced her homeward voyage, ultimately reaching Pier 12, NOB Norfolk, on 3 August.

A little over a month later, *America* sailed for the North Sea, to participate in a NATO exercise, "Northern Merger," departing Norfolk on 6 September. *America* joined with HMS *Ark Royal* in providing air support for a NATO task force and for an amphibious landing. Throughout the exercise, Soviet surface

units, as well as "Bear" and "Badger" aircraft, conducted surveillance missions over and near the NATO force.

Upon the conclusion of "Northern Merger," *America* steamed to Portsmouth, England, arriving there on 29 September to commence a five-day port visit. The carrier proceeded thence back to the United States, reaching Pier 12, NOB, Norfolk on 12 October, to commence preparations for a major overhaul at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard. Entering the yard on 27 November 1974, *America* remained there until 27 September 1975, when the ship got underway to conduct post-overhaul sea trials.

*America* departed Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 16 October 1975 for local operations off the Virginia capes and, after a few weeks alongside her familiar berth, Pier 12, NOB, Norfolk, departed Hampton Roads for Cuban waters and refresher training.

While steaming north of Cuba and preparing for the operational readiness inspection that concludes refresher training, *America* picked up distress calls, immediately deploying helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft to search for a disabled motorized sailboat, *Ruggentino*. One of the carrier's helicopters located a boat in distress and guided a tug to the scene and the tug soon took the disabled craft in tow.

That boat, however, proved to be named *Content*, so *America* and her aircraft resumed the search for *Ruggentino*. One of her planes located the craft in question soon thereafter, and the ship dispatched a motor whaleboat to assist. *America's* sailors soon had the boat pumped out and headed for port. This effort, two successful search-and-rescue missions in one night under adverse weather conditions earned the ship a "well done."

*America* completed her schedule of training in Cuban waters, and then returned north, arriving back at Norfolk on 16 December 1975. Following the year-end standdown, the carrier resumed local operations out of Norfolk in January 1976 and, in March, participated in Exercise "Safe Pass '76" with ships of the Canadian, West German, Dutch and British navies. She ultimately sailed for the Mediterranean on 15 April 1976 with CVW-6 and Commander, Carrier Group (CarGru) 4, Rear Admiral James B. Linder, embarked.

Soon after her arrival in the turnover port of Rota, *America* participated in a NATO exercise, "Open Gate," before entering the Mediterranean. Passing the Pillars of Hercules on 3 May, the ship entered into the eastern Mediterranean in support of Operation "Fluid Drive," a contingency operation for the evacuation of non-combatants from war-torn Lebanon. For the next three months, the carrier maintained a high state of readiness. In conjunction with "Fluid Drive," the ship and her air wing maintained continuous surveillance of the Soviet Mediterranean fleet, which at that point was at its largest since the Yom Kippur War of 1973.

On 24 May, *America* anchored in Rhodes, Greece, to commence her first liberty of the deployment; but violent anti-American demonstrations prevented the carrier's crew from going ashore; and the ship stood out two days later. *America* conducted a port visit to Taranto, Italy, instead, but the deteriorating situation in the eastern Mediterranean required the ship to sail sooner than scheduled.

The assassination of the United States ambassador to Lebanon, Francis E. Meloy, and Economic Counsellor Robert O. Waring, as they were on their way to visit Lebanese President Elias Sarkis on 13 June 1976 prompted the evacuation of Americans from that nation a week later, on the 20th. *America* remained on alert while landing craft from the dock landing ship *Spiegel Grove* (LSD-32) transferred the evacuees from the beach to safety. Following the successful evacuation, the carrier proceeded westward for a few days of liberty in Italian ports, celebrating the country's bicentennial Independence Day, 4 July 1976, at Taranto.

Proceeding back into the eastern Mediterranean on 11 July to conduct a missile exercise north of Crete, the ship continued to maintain responsibility for "Fluid Drive." On 27 July, as more Americans were evacuated from Lebanon on board *Portland* (LSD-37), the carrier provided support. Relieved of her responsibilities in the eastern Mediterranean on 2 August, *America* reached Naples soon thereafter, and remained in port for two weeks. The carrier returned to sea on 18 August and participated in Exercise "National Week XXI" with other 6th Fleet units.

Upon the termination of "National Week XXI," *America* proceeded to Palma de Mallorca, whence she proceeded to participate in "Poop Deck 3-76" with Spanish Air Force units and United

States Air Force units based in Spain. Then, following visits to the Spanish ports of Barcelona and Malaga, *America* took part in the final exercise of her Mediterranean cruise, Exercise "Display Determination." HMS *Ark Royal* teamed with *America*, and ships from the navies of Italy, Greece, Portugal, and Turkey participated as well. The American carrier conducted convoy escort duties, simulated close air support for amphibious operations, and simulated strikes against military targets. Upon conclusion of "Display Determination," the carrier proceeded to Rota, where she was relieved by *Franklin D. Roosevelt*. *America* ultimately reached Norfolk on 25 October 1976.

On 5 November, the carrier proceeded up the Elizabeth River to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard, where she remained into February 1977. *America* then operated locally out of Norfolk into the spring of 1977 until sailing for the Mayport, Fla., operating area on 3 May. Following her participation in Exercise "Solid Shield 77," a joint service amphibious training exercise, the carrier returned to Norfolk on 24 May.

*America* sailed from Hampton Roads on 10 June 1977 for a five-week South Atlantic deployment as a unit of TG 20.4. Other ships in company included *South Carolina* (CGN-37), *Claude V. Ricketts* (DLG-5), *DuPont* (DD-941), and *Neosho* (AO-143). Following her return to Norfolk, *America* operated locally before she sailed to conduct operations in the Caribbean.

Thence returning to Norfolk on 27 August, *America* sailed for the Mediterranean on 29 September, with CVW-6 embarked, and reached Rota on 9 October. Departing that port on 14 October, the carrier proceeded to the Tyrrhenian Sea, where she operated until 26 October. Following a port call at Brindisi, Italy, *America* began operations in the Ionian Sea on 7 November, and anchored at Souda Bay, Crete, two days later. She operated locally in these waters until 12 November, when she sailed for Kithira Island, Greece, anchoring there on the 19th.

Weighing anchor the following morning, *America* sailed for the Adriatic Sea, bound for Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia. Visiting this seaport from 22 to 26 November, the carrier transited the Adriatic for a port call at Trieste, staying there from 28 November to 3 December. Returning to operate in the waters of Souda Bay for more exercises, *America* subsequently departed Crete on 12 December for Palma de Mallorca, where she spent Christmas.

Departing Palma two days later, *America* proceeded through the Ligurian Sea to her next port of call, Genoa, which she reached on 30 December. She remained there until 8 January 1978, when she sailed to carry out antisubmarine exercises in the Tyrrhenian Sea, upon the conclusion of which she anchored in Golfo di Palma, Sicily. Operations in the western Mediterranean and again in the Tyrrhenian Sea rounded out most of January 1978, and the ship rested briefly at Catania, Italy, before getting underway for Exercise "National Week" on 5 February.

She returned to the Tyrrhenian Sea and western Mediterranean for further exercises during March, and then visited Barcelona before she brought the deployment to a close with further exercises in the western Mediterranean. At Rota, she was relieved by *Forrestal* (CV-59), and sailed for Norfolk, arriving home on 25 April 1978.

Following post-deployment standdown, *America* conducted carrier qualifications off the Virginia capes, and then entered Norfolk Naval Shipyard for an availability. Upon the conclusion of that period of repairs and alterations, the carrier conducted post-availability sea trials on 19 and 20 September 1978, and conducted carrier qualifications with CVW-6 between 12 and 20 October. Tragedy marred the last day of operations, when a Grumman S-3 "Viking" antisubmarine aircraft went over the side upon landing; hung by the safety nets momentarily, the aircraft plunged into the sea soon thereafter. Although the pilots, Lt. Comdr. Ziolkowski and Lt. (j.g.) Renshaw ejected clear of the plane, they were not recovered.

*America* subsequently conducted refresher training out of Guantanamo Bay early in November, before she called at Ft. Lauderdale on 10 November to commence a four-day stay. Returning to Norfolk soon thereafter, the carrier remained in the Norfolk area, alternating periods of time inport alongside Pier 12 with type training and exercises off the Virginia capes.

The carrier cleared Norfolk on 5 January 1979 for the Caribbean operating areas, and conducted type training there from 5 to 23 January, after which time the ship visited St. Thomas, in the Virgin Islands, from 24 to 29 January. *America* then resumed type training in the waters of the Caribbean and West

Indies, concluding those evolutions on 12 February to return to Norfolk.

After bringing CVW-11 on board off the Virginia capes on 8 and 9 March, *America* spent the next two days moored at Pier 12, making final preparations for her departure for the Mediterranean. The carrier sailed on 13 March. Two days later, on the 15th, *America* conducted a "BEAREX" with a Lockheed P-3 "Orion" from Bermuda simulating a Russian "Bear" reconnaissance aircraft. Such practice proved timely, for the following day, A-7 and Grumman F-14 "Tomcat" aircraft from *America* intercepted a pair of the long-range Tupelov TU-95 "Bear-D" Planes that were en route to Cuba from their bases in the Soviet Union. The "Bears" never came within visual range of the carrier's battle group.

Reaching Rota on 24 March, *America* relieved *Saratoga* (CV-60), and commenced operations in the western Mediterranean on 29 March. During this deployment, the ship visited a variety of ports, starting with Naples, Taranto, and Catania. Moving into the Adriatic, the carrier stopped at Split, Yugoslavia, before moving north to Venice and Trieste. In the eastern Mediterranean, *America* called at Alexandria, Egypt, at Souda Bay, Crete. Returning west, she visited Palma de Mallorca and Barcelona in Spain, Marseilles on the coast of France, Genoa in northern Italy, and Valencia in Spain before heading for Rota. She completed turnover proceedings at Rota on 10 and 11 September 1979, and got underway immediately to commence the homeward voyage.

Highlighting this period were numerous multilateral and unilateral exercises, as in previous Mediterranean deployments. During one phase of "National Week XXVII," *America* and her consorts took part in an open sea exercise that took them into the waters of the Gulf of Sidra (Sirte)—claimed by Libya as territorial waters since 11 October 1973. The Libyan government serving notice that any ship or aircraft operating south of the 32° 30' north latitude would be violating its territory, *America*'s battle group maintained an alert, in view of the proximity of Libyan airfields and Soviet-made aircraft operating therefrom. Departing Augusta Bay, Sicily, on 26 July, the task group arrived in its exercise area on the 28th. As planes from CVW-11 maintained nearly continuous fighter cover, the ships conducted their exercise unhindered.

Ultimately departing Rota on 12 September 1979 to conduct a "blue water" turnover with *Nimitz* (CVN-68), *America* encountered her second pair of "Bears". F-14 "Tomcats" of VF-213 intercepted the two, however, and caused them to turn away to the north, having never sighted a single ship in the carrier's battle group. Reaching Norfolk on 22 September, *America* stood down after her 6th Fleet deployment.

The carrier departed Norfolk again on 15 October for Mayport, and conducted local operations off the coast of Florida before moving into the Gulf of Mexico to conduct carrier qualifications. Returning north upon completion of those evolutions, *America* put to sea on 30 October for more carrier qualifications; these, however, involved the first arrested carrier landings of the new McDonnell-Douglas F/A-18 "Hornet." This aircraft underwent rigorous testing over the days which followed, before *America* returned to Norfolk on 3 November.

Entering the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 6 November 1979, *America* underwent repairs and alterations for much of 1980, commencing her post-repair trials on 23 September 1980. Among the work performed during the availability was the installation of the NATO "Sea Sparrow" missile and close-in weapon systems such as the multi-barreled "Phalanx" machine gun.

The ship carried out a second period of post-repair trials from 16 to 21 October, after which time she returned to NOB, Norfolk, whence she conducted sea trials from 27 to 29 October. Subsequently conducting refresher training out of Guantanamo Bay, *America* returned to the Virginia capes operating area to conduct carrier qualifications in early December. She spent the remainder of the year 1980, undergoing upkeep at NOB, Norfolk.

*America* operated locally in the Virginia capes area into January 1981 and, during these operations on 14 January 1981, brought on board a Grumman C-1A "Trader" COD aircraft piloted by Ens. Brenda Robinson, USNR. Ens. Robinson became the first black female naval aviator to be carrier qualified. The ship later conducted carrier qualifications for CVW-11.

On 29 January 1981, as *America* was returning to NOB, Norfolk, she received a message from a Greek motor vessel,



*Aikaterini*, in distress. *America*, diverted to the scene to render assistance until the Coast Guard could arrive, sent helicopters from her embarked HS-12 with damage control equipment, members of the ship's fire department, and damage control assistance to the stricken ship.

Returning to Pier 12, NOB, Norfolk on 2 February, *America* proceeded thence for carrier qualifications off the Virginia capes, and thence to the Caribbean for type training. Returning to Norfolk on 19 March, *America*—in company with her consorts, *California* (CGN-36) and *Preble* (DLG-46)—subsequently sailed for the Mediterranean on 14 April 1981, destined, ultimately, for the Indian Ocean.

Reaching Palma de Mallorca on 23 April, *America* then participated in NATO exercise "Daily Double," with the amphibious assault ship *Nassau* (LHA-4), as well as with Greek and Italian Navy units on the 28th, before she steamed to Port Said, Egypt.

Originally scheduled to have commenced her transit of the Suez Canal on 5 May, the tense situation in Lebanon prompted a 24-hour "hold" on the evolution. Given the go-ahead soon thereafter, *America* made the 104.5 mile transit on 6 May, in ten hours—the first United States Navy carrier to steam through the Suez Canal since *Intrepid* (CVA-11) had made the passage shortly before the Arab-Israeli "Six-Day War" of 1967. It was also the first "super-carrier" to transit the canal since it had been modified to permit passage of super-tankers.

*America* operated in the Indian Ocean, on "Gonzo" Station, for the first time between 12 May and 3 June, after which time she visited Singapore. On 18 June, the carrier departed that port for her second stint on "Gonzo Station." This deployment was to last 35 days.

On 15 July, *America* was requested to provide search and rescue (SAR) aircraft to assist in locating a merchant ship in distress in the northern Arabian Sea. The Greek merchantman *Irenes Sincerity* was reportedly afire. *America's* planes located the ship and *California* rescued the 39 crewmen, disembarking them in good condition in Karachi, Pakistan, soon thereafter.

Upon completion of her second northern Arabian Sea line period on 4 August, *America* shaped a course for Australian waters, conducting a "Weapons Week" exercise in the vicinity of Diego Garcia. During "Weapons Week," a Lockheed P-3 "Orion" of Patrol Squadron (VP) 50 requested two F-14 "Tomcats" from *America*, flying in the vicinity of Pierre Island, near Diego Garcia, to assist in contacting their ship for SAR assistance. *California* sped to the island and located an individual stranded on Pierre Island; he had been on a treasure-hunting expedition bound from Sri Lanka to Mauritius. The cruiser took the man to Diego Garcia.

Departing the Diego Garcia operating area on 15 August, *America* conducted a unique burial-at-sea on the 18th, when the remains of the late Lt. Stephen O. Musselman were consigned to the ocean. Musselman had been shot down on 10 September 1972 in an A-7 "Corsair" from *America*, over North Vietnam, and his remains had been returned by the Vietnamese government on 8 July 1981. Lt. Musselman's widow requested that these remains be consigned to the last ship he had served in and buried thence.

*America* anchored at Fremantle on 25 August, and remained there for six days, sailing for "Gonzo Station" on the 31st. During her third line period, the ship spent 34 days on station. On 23 September, a fire broke out in a steam trunk line that carries steam from the main engineering spaces to the flight deck catapult system, at about 1745. Soon after *America's* fire party arrived on the scene to isolate the fire, smoke began filling the areas adjacent to the crew berthing areas, so Capt. James F. Dorsey, Jr., ordered general quarters sounded.

*America's* firefighters soon managed to quell the blaze, and the ship secured from battle stations at 2316. The carrier resumed normal flight operations the next morning at sunrise, and remained on station until relieved by *Coral Sea* (CV-43) on 16 October. Two days later, while *America* steamed toward the Bab el Mandeb Strait, the ship went to general quarters, in view of threats issued by the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen. The ship passed without incident, and continued her journey through the Red Sea unhindered.

On 21 October 1981, *America* commenced the northbound transit of the Suez Canal. This transit, unlike the comparatively light-hearted one of 6 May, proved more tense. As a result of the unsettled conditions in Egypt following the 6 October 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat, the Egyptian government accorded *America's* passage through the Suez Canal the utmost

security considerations. The Egyptian Navy provided a patrol vessel to escort the carrier, while an Egyptian Air Force helicopter conducted reconnaissance flight over both banks of the waterway. Egyptian Army units patrolled the adjacent canal roads. Additionally, liaison officers on board the carrier maintained constant touch with the security forces by radio.

Making the passage of the canal without incident, *America* continued on across the Mediterranean, reaching Palma de Mallorca on 25 October. After a three-day port call, the carrier conducted exercises with Spanish forces, and subsequently sailed for home on 1 November, departing the Mediterranean the following day. She arrived at Norfolk on 12 November.

Following a short standdown, *America* conducted carrier qualifications in the Virginia capes operating area, before she moored at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 14 December. Emerging from the naval shipyard on 20 April 1982, *America* operated locally off the Virginia capes. Departing Norfolk on 10 May, the ship steamed to the Guantanamo Bay operating area and returning to her home port on 28 May.

Following further carrier qualifications off the Virginia capes, the carrier then steamed south to conduct type training in the West Indies, interspersing these evolutions with a port visit to St. Thomas. Returning to Norfolk on 8 July, *America* operated locally between 22 and 24 July, before she sailed on 22 August, with CVW-1 embarked, to participate in joint NATO exercises "United Effort" and "Northern Wedding 82."

*America* visited Edinburgh, Scotland, from 15 to 21 September, and proceeded thence to Portsmouth, England, arriving there on the 23d. Sailing for the Mediterranean on the 26th, the carrier operated briefly with the 6th Fleet, participating in exercise "Display Determination" between 30 September and 8 October. She then sailed for the United States, and, following her operational readiness evaluation in the Caribbean operating areas, reached Mayport to disembark CVW-1. *America* returned to Norfolk on 4 November.

*America* departed Norfolk on 8 December, proceeded to the Virginia capes operating area and embarked CVW-1, and set out across the Atlantic. Visiting Palma de Mallorca on 22 December, *America* remained there through the Christmas holiday, weighing anchor on 28 December to sail for the Lebanese coast, where she was to take up duty in support of the Multinational Peacekeeping Force in strife-torn Lebanon. Relieving *Nimitz* on station on 2 January 1983, *America* spent the next 18 days off Lebanon, before *Nimitz* took over on 20 January. Steaming thence to Pireaus, Greece, *America*, along with *Dale* (CG-19) and *Savannah* (AOR-4), anchored there on 23 January for a five-day port visit to Athens.

Underway on 29 January, the carrier transited the Sea of Crete en route to an overnight anchorage at Port Said. Transiting the Suez Canal on 31 January, *America* reached the Red Sea the same day and reported for duty with the 7th Fleet on 4 February. On 9 February, the carrier and her accompanying battle group conducted exercise "Beacon Flash 83-3." Subsequently, on 28 February, *America* and her consorts conducted a "Weapons Week" exercise in the vicinity of Diego Garcia. Following those evolutions, the carrier visited Colombo, Sri Lanka, anchoring on 7 March. Weighing anchor on 12 March, *America* resumed operations in the Indian Ocean soon thereafter, culminating in "Beacon Flash 83-4," and a subsequent port visit to Masirah Island, Oman.

Steaming thence to Mombasa, Kenya, and a five-day port visit, *America* departed that port for a week of intense flight operations, followed by participation in "Beacon Flash 83-5" on 19 April. Returning to anchor at Masirah Island again three days later, the carrier and her battle group operated in the northern Arabian Sea, en route to the Suez Canal. Transiting that waterway on 4 May, *America* headed for Souda Bay, reaching an anchorage there on 7 May. Five days later, the carrier got underway for Malaga, Spain, reaching her destination on 14 May for a nine-day port visit. The ship subsequently departed Malaga on 23 May, and reached Norfolk on 2 June 1983.

*America* then entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 8 July. For four months, the ship underwent a period of repairs and alterations, emerging from the yard on 28 October 1983. She then operated locally off the Virginia capes with CVW-1 embarked, before she proceeded thence to Mayport, and, ultimately, to Puerto Rican waters for refresher training. Subsequently visiting Nassau, in the Bahamas, for a five-day port visit, *America*

returned to the east coast of the United States, reaching Mayport on 8 December. She then conducted carrier qualifications for both east and west coast squadrons en route to her home port, reaching Norfolk on 14 December 1983.

The carrier operated locally from Norfolk into February 1984, alternating periods of upkeep in port with carrier qualifications and exercises. She then conducted two periods of type training (6 to 20 February and 25 March to 8 April), interspersing these with an in-port period at Ft. Lauderdale from 21 to 24 February and then calling at St. Thomas upon conclusion of the second period of training. Returning to Norfolk on 22 March, *America* spent the next month preparing for her next deployment, and got underway to participate in exercise "Ocean Venture" on 24 April. Visiting Caracas, Venezuela, upon conclusion of that evolution, *America* departed on 9 May for the Mediterranean.

Reaching Malaga, Spain, on 21 May, the carrier commenced her transit of the Mediterranean on 29 May and reached Port Said on 3 June. Transiting the Suez Canal on the following day, she passed through the Red Sea and joined the 7th Fleet on 8 June, relieving *Kitty Hawk* (CV-63). Returning to the 6th Fleet on 29 August, *America* transited the Suez Canal on 2 September, bound for Naples.

The carrier visited Monaco from 13 to 22 September before she participated in one phase of NATO exercise, "Display Determination." After stopping briefly to Naples, *America* returned to sea soon thereafter, and took part in the second phase of "Display Determination" before visiting Catania. Ultimately reaching Augusta Bay on 27 October, she was relieved by *Dwight D. Eisenhower* (CVN-69) on that date, sailing soon thereafter for the United States.

Arriving at Norfolk on 14 November, *America* conducted carrier qualifications in the Virginia capes operating areas from 29 November to 17 December before returning to port on the 18th. The ship remained in an upkeep status until 18 January 1985, when she shifted to the Norfolk Naval Shipyard for overhaul.

Emerging from the yard on 13 May for sea trials off the Virginia capes, *America* remained at Norfolk until 28 May, when she sailed to conduct refresher training. Then, following a port call at Port Everglades, Fla. (13 to 17 June), *America* conducted carrier qualifications before returning to Norfolk on 25 June. The ship operated locally out of Norfolk through mid-August.

*America* sailed on 24 August to participate in "Ocean Safari," a six-week NATO exercise which ultimately took her to Norwegian waters. After visiting Portsmouth, England, upon conclusion of her training, *America* returned to Norfolk on 9 October. She spent the remainder of the year 1985 alternating periods of upkeep at NOB, Norfolk, with local operations in the Virginia capes operating area.

As the new year, 1986, began, tensions in the Mediterranean basin would result in *America*'s sailing to deploy with the 6th Fleet one month earlier than planned. On 7 January 1986, President Ronald Reagan ordered all American citizens out of Libya, and broke off all remaining ties between the two nations. At the same time, the President directed the dispatch of a second carrier battle group to the Mediterranean, and directed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to look into military operations against Libya, a country strongly suspected of fomenting terrorist activity.

Operations near Libya began at the end of January. These evolutions, collectively named "Attain Document," were carried out between 24 and 31 January 1986 and between 10 and 15 February, by surface ships and aircraft. *America*, with CVW-1 embarked, and her accompanying battle group departed Norfolk on 10 March 1986, and arrived in the Mediterranean in time to participate in the third phase of "Attain Document," a freedom of navigation (FON) exercise in the Gulf of Sidra.

Late on 23 March, American planes flew south of latitude 30° 30'—the "Line of Death" proclaimed by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. On 24 March, *Ticonderoga* (CG-47), accompanied by two destroyers, *Scott* (DDG-995) and *Caron* (DD-970), moved south of the "Line," covered by fighter aircraft, at 0600.

A Libyan missile installation near Surt (Sirte) launched two Soviet-made SA-5 "Gammon" surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) at 0752, toward F-14A "Tomcats" of *America*'s VF-102. Later that afternoon, the installation at Surt (Sirte) fired additional SAMs at American planes, but, like the first pair, went wide of their mark. About 1430, a Libyan missile-equipped *Combattante II* G-type patrol craft, sortied from Misratah, Libya, and approached *Ticonderoga* and her consorts. Two Grumman A-6E "Intruders" from *America*'s Attack Squadron (VA) 34 fired "Harpoon" mis-

siles at the craft and sank her in the first use of the "Harpoon" in combat. Shortly thereafter, when American radars detected the Libyan installation at Sirte activating its target acquisition radars, two A-7E "Corsairs" from *Saratoga*'s VA-81 put the site out of action with "HARMs" (high-speed anti-radiation missiles).

One hour after the first patrol boat had sortied, a Soviet-built *Nanuchka*-type patrol craft began heading out into the Gulf of Sidra. "Intruders" from VA-34 and *Saratoga*'s VA-85 attacked with "Rockeye" cluster bombs, but the craft sought refuge alongside a neutral merchant ship, and avoided destruction. Damaged, she returned to the port of Benghazi after nightfall.

The following day, 25 March, at 0200, another *Nanuchka-II*-type patrol boat entered International waters and came under attack from "Intruders" from VA-85 and *Coral Sea*'s VA-55; the latter utilized "Rockeyes" in the attack, the former then sank the craft with a "Harpoon." The same squadrons then attacked and damaged a second *Nanuchka-II*, forcing her to put into Benghazi.

"Attain Document III" came to a close at 0900 on 27 March, three days ahead of schedule and after 48 hours of largely unchallenged use of the Gulf of Sidra by the United States Navy. Thence steaming to Augusta Bay, Sicily, *America* relieved *Saratoga* on station, and subsequently visited Livorno, Italy, from 4 to 8 April 1986.

In the meantime, intelligence information, however, in the wake of the strikes designed to let Col. Qaddafi know that the United States had not only the desire but the capability to respond effectively to terrorism, indicated that Qaddafi intended to retaliate. Such retaliation occurred soon thereafter.

On 5 April 1986, two days after a bomb exploded on board a Trans World Airways (TWA) flight en route to Athens, from Rome, killing four American citizens, a bomb exploded in the La Belle Discoteque in West Berlin, killing two American servicemen and a Turkish civilian. Another 222 people were wounded in the bombing—78 Americans among them. Col. Qaddafi threatened to escalate the violence against Americans, civilian and military, throughout the world.

Repeated efforts by the United States to persuade the Libyan leader to forsake terrorism as an instrument of policy, including an attempt to persuade other western nations to isolate Libya peacefully failed. Rumors of retaliation by the United States were soon followed by Qaddafi's threat to take all foreigners in Libya hostage, to use them as a shield to protect his military installations. In light of that threat, and of the failure of means to gain peaceful sanctions against Libya, and citing "incontrovertible evidence" of Libyan complicity in the recent terrorist acts, President Reagan directed that attacks on terrorist-related targets in Libya be carried out.

Operation "Eldorado Canyon" commenced early on the afternoon of 14 April 1986, as tanker aircraft took off from bases in England to support the Air Force North American F-111F and EF-111 planes that soon followed them into the air and began the long 3,000-mile trip to the target. Later that afternoon, between 1745 and 1820, *America* launched six "Intruders" (strike aircraft) from VA-34 and six A-7E "Corsair IIs" (strike support); *Coral Sea* launched her strike/strike support aircraft, eight A-6Es from VA-55 and six F/A-18 "Hornets" between 1750 and 1820. Both carriers launched additional aircraft to support the strike to provide a combat air patrol (CAP) and other functions.

"In a spectacular feat of mission planning and execution," the Navy and Air Force planes, based 3,000 miles apart, reached their targets on time at 1900. The "Hornets" from *Coral Sea* and "Corsair IIs" from *America* launched air-to-surface "Shrike" missiles and "HARMs" against Libyan SAM sites at Benghazi and Tripoli. Moments later, VA-34's "Intruders," roaring in at low-level in the blackness, dropped their Mk.82 bombs with near surgical precision on the Benghazi military barracks, reckoned to be an alternate command and control facility for terrorist activities and a billeting area for Qaddafi's elite Jamahiriyyah Guard, as well as a warehouse for components for MiG aircraft. VA-34's attack heavily damaged the warehouse, destroying four crated MiGs and damaging a fifth.

Following that counter-terrorist strike, *America* visited Naples between 28 April and 4 May, and then participated in NATO Exercise, "Distant Hammer" with units of the Italian and Turkish Air Forces, and visited Cannes upon conclusion of the evolution. During June, the carrier operated with *Coral Sea* and the newly arrived *Enterprise* (CVN-65), and took part in a "Poop Deck" exercise with Spanish and United States Air Force units

off the coast of Spain, arriving at Palma de Mallorca soon thereafter.

Participating in a NATO exercise, "Tridente," in late June, *America* visited Naples before she participated in a "National Week" exercise. Subsequently visiting Catania and operating in the central and western Mediterranean, the carrier wound up the month of July at Benidorm, Spain, before returning to sea for further operations at sea in that region. Visiting Naples between 11 and 17 August, *America* spent the rest of her deployment in operations in the western and central Mediterranean before *John F. Kennedy* relieved her at Rota between 28 and 31 August. *America* arrived back at Norfolk on 10 September 1986, and after local operations, interspersed with in-port upkeep, entered the Norfolk Naval Shipyard on 20 November 1986 for an overhaul which lasted until 11 February 1988. She spent the remainder of that year operating along the east coast and in the Caribbean.

*America* received five battle stars for her service in the Vietnam War.

### *American*

#### I

(Bark: t. 329; dr. 15')

*American*—an old bark-rigged whaler which had been laid up at Edgartown, Mass., because of the diminishing demand for whale oil caused by a growing use of kerosene in lamps—was purchased by the Union Navy on 1 November 1861 at Edgartown to be sunk as an obstruction in one of the channels approaching Savannah harbor. The vessel was laden with 300 tons of stone and—commanded by W. A. Beard, master—sailed from New Bedford, Mass., on 20 November 1861 with 24 other ships collectively known as the first contingent of stone whalers.

However, when these whalers began to arrive in waters off Savannah, they found the Southern defenders of that port had been alarmed by the Union conquest of Port Royal, S.C., and had decided to evacuate Tybee Island and relocate its batteries to Fort Pulaski. Moreover, to prevent Northern warships from bringing their guns within range of the latter stronghold, they had sunk old hulks in narrow points of the channel and, ironically, had already carried out the mission of Union's stone bearing whalers. As a result, *American* and most of her consorts sailed for Port Royal on the 10th and 11th. There, Flag Officer DuPont decided that these ships could be put to good use as obstructions in the main channel in Charleston harbor. They were moved to that port, and *American* was sunk in the main channel there on 20 December 1861.

#### II

(ScStr: dp. 13,000; l. 430'; b. 51'; dr. 28'; s. 10 k.; cpl. 70; a. 1 5", 1 3")

*American*—a steel-hulled, single-screw freighter built in 1900 at Chester, Pa., by the Delaware River Shipbuilding Co.—was transferred by the United States Shipping Board (USSB) to the War Department early in 1918 for use as a Navy-manned cargo ship. *American*—assigned the identification number, Id. NO. 2292—was turned over to the Navy on 22 May 1918, and commissioned at New York on 25 May 1918, Lt. Comdr. Myron P. Schmeerhorn, USNR, in command.

Sailing from New York on the last day of May, *American* joined an east-bound convoy on 2 June and reached Brest, France, on the 17th. Soon thereafter she proceeded via La Pallice to Bordeaux, where she discharged her cargo. The freighter cleared the French coast on 6 July and arrived at New York on the 22d. Before the summer was over, she made one additional round-trip voyage to France before departing New York for Bordeaux on 5 August and arriving back home on 6 September.

She commenced her third cycle on 4 October, but, during poor visibility conditions collided with another NOTS cargoman, *West Gate*, shortly after 0228 on 7 October. *American's* stem cut sharply into *West Gate's* starboard side, near the poop. *West Gate*, mortally stricken, sank swiftly; and seven of her men lost their lives. *American* and the other vessels in convoy rescued the survivors.

After voyage repairs at Halifax, *American* sailed for Gibraltar on 27 November 1918 and reached that port on 9 December. After calling at Marseilles, the freighter returned to New York on 8 February 1919. Returned to her prewar owners, the Hawaiian Steamship Co., on 4 March, the ship's name was stricken from the Navy list on 14 March 1919.

### *American Explorer*

(AO-165: dp. 31,300 (f.); l. 615'; b. 80'; dr. 32'; s. 20 k.; cpl. 47; cl. *American Explorer*; T. T5-S-RM2a)

*American Explorer* (AO-165) was laid down on 9 July 1957 at Pascagoula, Miss., by the Ingalls Shipbuilding Corp.; launched on 11 April 1958; and completed on 27 October 1959. Upon completion, the tanker was placed in service with the Military Sea Transportation Service (MSTS), though operated under contract by a commercial shipping firm. *American Explorer* hauled petroleum products for the Navy for a quarter of a century. She operated most frequently between Atlantic coast naval bases and oil ports in the Gulf of Mexico-Caribbean Sea region. On 30 September 1978, she was reclassified a transport oiler and redesignated AOT-165. *American Explorer's* support missions for the Navy came to an end in September 1984 when she entered the Maritime Administration's Ready Reserve Fleet berthed at Beaumont, Tex. As of the beginning of 1987, the tanker remained at Beaumont.

*American Flyer*, see *Flyer* (T-AG-178).

### *American Legion*

A patriotic organization founded in Paris, France, in March 1919, comprised of veterans of the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) and chartered by the United States Congress on 16 September 1919. A former name retained.

(AP-35: dp. 13,736; l. 535'; b. 72'; dr. 30'7"; cpl. 682 (1945); trp. 1,644 (1945); a. 1 5", 4 3", 8 .50 cal. mg. (1941); cl. *American Legion*)

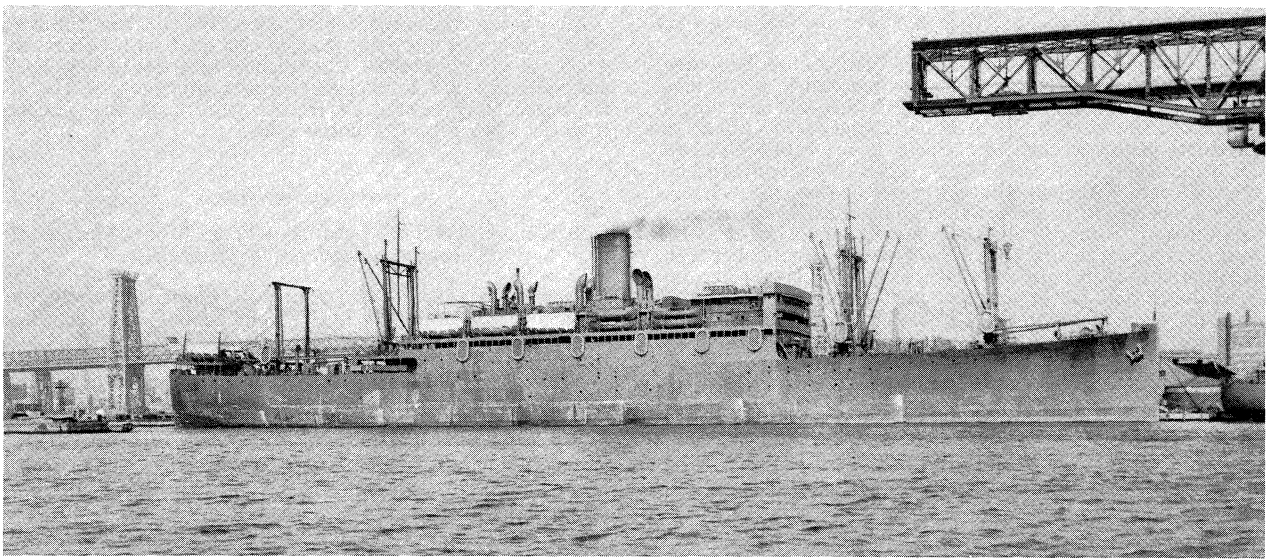
*American Legion*—a steel-hulled, twin-screw passenger and cargo steamship—was laid down on 10 January 1919 under a United States Shipping Board (USSB) contract at Camden, N.J., by the New York Shipbuilding Corp. and launched on 11 October 1919. She was delivered to the USSB upon completion, on 15 July 1921.

For over four years, *American Legion* remained in the hands of the Federal Government, under the auspices of the USSB. However, on 18 December 1925, as part of a "package deal" which involved the sale of the liners *American Legion*, *Southern Cross*, *Pan America*, and *Western World*, the government sold these ships to the Munson Line for operation on the New York-to-South America run. For the next fourteen years, *American Legion* and her running-mates were familiar sights on that particular passenger-and-cargo route, until financial difficulties forced foreclosure of the Munson Line on 13 March 1939. She was then laid up in the Patuxent River.

Her enforced idleness did not last long. A little under three months after Hitler's legions had marched into Poland, triggering World War II in Europe, the Maritime Commission (the successor to the USSB) transferred *American Legion* to the War Department on 28 November 1939 for use as a troop transport. On 19 December 1939, the ship was formally transferred, and taken to New York for rehabilitation and conversion by the Atlantic Basin Iron Works of Brooklyn, N.Y.

*American Legion* departed New York City early in February 1940, on her maiden voyage, bound for Panama. Over the next few months, the ship made five round-trip voyages to the Canal Zone, with stops at Charleston, S.C., and San Juan, Puerto Rico, carrying civilian and military passengers. The worsening situation in Europe, though, soon resulted in the ship's receiving a special mission.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt directed that *American Legion* leave New York immediately and proceed to Petsamo, Finland. There, she was to embark the Crown Princess Martha



*American Legion* (AP-35) at the New York Navy Yard, 25 October 1941, her paint work looking worn from arduous service. Note that at this stage in her career she is still unarmed. (19-N-25715)

of Norway, and her party, to bring them to the United States, their homeland having fallen to the Germans the previous spring. Further, as Acting Secretary of State Sumner Welles reported to the United States Minister in Sweden, the President also desired that Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, the former American Minister to Norway, return in the same vessel. The transport would "likewise bring back to this country such Americans in Scandinavian countries as can be accommodated and as may not be able to return safely in any other way."

*American Legion*—her neutrality shown clearly by the U.S. flags painted prominently on her sides—sailed for Finland on 25 July, and reached Petsamo on 6 August, as scheduled. On the 15th, she embarked Crown Princess Martha of Norway, and her three children, the Princesses Ragnild and Astrid, and Prince Harald. The Army troopship also embarked a host of American nationals and refugees from a variety of countries: Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, and the Netherlands, the total number of people being 897. Among the passengers was a young Danish comedian and musician, Victor Borge. The American Legation in Stockholm, Sweden, also consented to the embarkation of 15 "prominent nationals of American republics . . . including the Mexican minister . . ."

Unbeknownst to probably all but a handful of individuals, *American Legion* also took on board an important cargo during her brief stay at Petsamo. Before she sailed on the 16th, after an almost Herculean effort involving taking this special cargo by truck the entire length of Sweden, the transport loaded a twin-mount 40-millimeter Bofors antiaircraft gun, "equipped with standard sights, and accompanied by spare parts and 3,000 rounds of ammunition." The State Department had obtained the cooperation of no less than three governments to make possible the shipment of the Bofors gun: British, Swedish, and Finnish. The move had been made none too soon for *American Legion* was the last neutral ship permitted to leave Petsamo.

*American Legion* sailed for the United States on 16 August, and reached New York 12 days later, escorted the final leg of the voyage of several American destroyers. The transport unloaded the Bofors brought from Petsamo, whence it was shipped to Dahlgren, Va., where it would be tested, and ultimately adopted by the Navy and produced domestically. Its installation in American warships from late 1942 proved a significant upgrading in the antiaircraft capability of the ships of the U.S. Navy.

*American Legion* soon returned to the more prosaic calling she had pursued since earlier in the year, that of an Army transport, and resumed the regularly-scheduled service between New York and the Panama Canal Zone. Ultimately, as the United States expanded her defense perimeter, *American Legion* sup-

ported this movement, transporting men and cargo to such ports as Hamilton, Bermuda, and Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, as well as to Cristobal, in the Canal Zone.

As the United States began assuming a greater share of the Battle of the Atlantic, to aid the hard-pressed British, the 6th Marine Regiment was taken to Iceland, where it relieved a British garrison of defense duties. Soon thereafter, a second troop and supply movement followed. *American Legion* sailed from New York on 27 July 1941, as part of a convoy which included within its escort the aircraft carrier *Wasp* (CV-7).

*American Legion*—whose cargo included Army Air Corps gear earmarked for use by the 33d Pursuit Squadron (whose P-40 fighters were flown off from *Wasp*)—reached Reykjavik, Iceland, on 6 August. Unable to enter the inner harbor because of her deep draft, *American Legion* discharged her cargo and disembarked her passengers into tank lighters and motor launches over the days that followed, the cargo movement facilitated by marines and sailors from the ships.

Having delivered the men and goods to Reykjavik, the convoy sailed on the 12th with its heavy escort and reached New York on 21 August. The next day, *American Legion* was acquired by the Navy and classified as a transport, AP-35. She was placed in commission on the afternoon of 26 August 1941, Comdr. Thomas D. Warner in command.

*American Legion*, having shed her white Army transport livery for a more businesslike and somber dark gray, was towed to Pier 3, Army Transport Service Pier of Embarkation, Brooklyn, by four tugs, on 12 September, and commenced taking on cargo that afternoon. Shortly before noon the following day, she began embarking civilian passengers for her maiden voyage as a Navy transport.

Underway for the Gravesend Bay Explosive Anchorage soon thereafter, *American Legion* loaded a cargo of ammunition—under the supervision of a detail of Coast Guardsmen from USCGC *Arundel*—early that afternoon, and, after loading the balance of the cargo the following day, weighed anchor for Charleston, S.C., at 1412. She reached her destination on the afternoon of 18 September.

There, she embarked contingents of troops slated for garrison duties, and sailed for Bermuda on the morning of the 19th. On the afternoon of the 22d, as she neared her destination, her local escort—two Army planes—arrived overhead and accompanied the ship on the last leg of her voyage. Ultimately, at 1945 on 22 September, she moored in Hamilton harbor. She disembarked troops the following morning, and, the following afternoon, sailed for Puerto Rico.

*American Legion* reached San Juan three days later, mooring at Pier 7, Puerto Rico Dock Co., shortly after noon. There, she



debarked civilian passengers as well as 33 Army officers and 176 men, and embarked passengers for the rest of the voyage. Underway on the afternoon of 29 September, the transport reached "Ceriseport"—the code name for Saint John, Antigua—the next morning. The ship there discharged more cargo and took on board another group of passengers on 2 October before she sailed on the morning of 4 October for Puerto Rico.

*American Legion* returned once more to San Juan on 8 October, mooring at 0956 and disembarking naval enlisted passengers brought from Trinidad. Once more, her turnaround was comparatively swift, for she was underway again on the morning of 10 October, bound for Hamilton. Late that afternoon, though, the ship's port main engine and steering engine proved troublesome. As *American Legion* limped back to San Juan, two Navy tugs came out to assist, as did the lighthouse tender, USCGC *Acacia*. Ultimately, though, it was the small seaplane tender *Thrush* (AVP-3) that came to the rescue, passing a line to the crippled transport at 1650 and taking her in tow back to San Juan.

Following repairs, *American Legion* sailed for Hamilton on the morning of 18 October. Anchoring in Murray's Anchorage on the morning of the 21st, she embarked New York-bound passengers and took departure the same day. Ultimately, on 23 October, *American Legion* reached Pier 2, Army Base, Brooklyn, and disembarked her passengers—civilian workers and naval dependents evacuated from Puerto Rico. Underway soon thereafter, the transport anchored off Staten Island that same afternoon.

*American Legion* weighed anchor on the morning of the 24th and moored at the New York Navy Yard. Initially slated for repair work at the Morse Drydock Co., Brooklyn, the transport was taken, instead, to the Bethlehem Steel Co. yard in Brooklyn, for completion of an overhaul. She remained there into January 1942.

Assigned to the Naval Transportation Service (NTS) on 6 February, *American Legion* embarked men slated for duty at a destroyer base being established at Londonberry, Northern Ireland, and sailed, in convoy, on the first leg of her voyage, bound for Halifax. Engineering difficulties, however, soon came to the fore again, and "engineering unreliability" caused her to be sent to the Boston Navy Yard for repairs. Accordingly, escorted by *Nicholson* (DD-442) and *Lea* (DD-118), *American Legion* reached Boston on 4 March after a two-day passage from Nova Scotia. Ultimately deemed ready for service once more, *American Legion* reported for duty with the NTS on 28 March 1942.

On 9 April 1942, *American Legion* sailed from New York for the Panama Canal Zone, bound, ultimately for Tongatabu, in the Tonga, or Friendly, Islands, which she reached on 8 May 1942. There she disembarked her passengers—Army officers, nurses, and enlisted men who were to establish a field hospital on Tongatabu—and proceeded on to Wellington, New Zealand, arriving there on 20 May. *American Legion* remained at Wellington through mid-July, earmarked for participation in the United States' first offensive landing operation in the Pacific War—the invasion of Guadalcanal, in the Solomons.

Three days before she was to sail from Wellington, she received an augmentation of her antiaircraft battery—a dozen 20 millimeter Oerlikon machine guns. Under the direction of the ship's executive officer, Comdr. Ratcliffe C. Welles, and the gunnery officer, Lt. Comdr. Elmore S. Pettyjohn, USNR, *American Legion's* ship's force installed the battery on the ship's former sun deck in 48 hours, laboring continuously in inclement weather and having the battery in firing order by the time the ship upped-anchor and sailed on 18 July. Rendezvousing with TF-44 on the following day, the transport, with elements of the 5th Marines embarked, proceeded to Koro, in the Fiji Islands, for rehearsals for Operation "Watchtower." During that training and practice evolution, the ship embarked war correspondent Richard Tregaskis, whose experiences would later be chronicled in the book, *Guadalcanal Diary*.

Assigned to Task Group "X-ray," ten attack transports and five attack cargo ships, *American Legion* proceeded thence to the Solomon Islands. On the morning of 7 August 1942, she went to general quarters at 0545 and manned "ship to shore" stations fifteen minutes later. At 0614, attending cruisers and destroyers opened fire on the beachheads, softening up the beaches for the impending landing. *American Legion* and *Fuller* (AP-14) soon landed the first troops to go ashore on Guadalcanal.

That afternoon, while the landings proceeded apace, *American Legion* joined in the antiaircraft barrage that repelled the initial

Japanese air attacks on the invasion fleet, as she did the next day. Discharging cargo at "Red" Beach on the morning of 8 August, the transport got underway as a wave of Japanese twin-engined bombers came after the shipping off Guadalcanal. At noon, *American Legion* sighted the incoming planes, which dropped their bombs near the supporting cruisers and destroyers before heading toward the amphibious ships.

During the action, one Mitsubishi G4M1 Type 97 land attack plane ("Betty") passed from starboard to port directly over *American Legion's* stern, at 100 feet. The after 20-millimeter guns and .50-caliber machine guns—as well as the larger 3-inch guns—all opened up in a deadly fusillade, while men on board the transport could see the Japanese aircrew manning their own machine guns to sweep the decks with gunfire. Some of this return fire fatally wounded Seaman 1st Class Charles Kaplan. Riddled from practically all quarters, the "Betty" crashed into the water close aboard on the port quarter.

*American Legion* still lay off "Red" Beach in the predawn hour of the 9th, too, and began observing heavy gunfire commencing at 0148 to the northwestward. Lookouts also saw flares and tracers, with parachute flares brilliantly lighting up the area to the northeastward. With this, Transport Group "X-ray" ceased discharging cargo and darkened ship, remaining shut down for the rest of the night, crews at general quarters. *American Legion's* men did not know it at the time, but they were witnessing the disastrous Battle of Savo Island, in which three American heavy cruisers were sunk, one American heavy cruiser damaged and an Australian heavy cruiser sunk.

The next morning, the transport began embarking survivors from the sunken heavy cruiser *Quincy* (CA-39) and from the destroyer *Ellet* (DD-398), completing the transfer by 1400. Within a half hour, *American Legion* got underway, the majority of her cargo having been unloaded by her busy boat crews who had labored almost continuously since the 7th with almost no sleep and subsisting only on sandwiches and coffee. She left behind one officer and 19 enlisted men as part of the burgeoning naval base at Guadalcanal, having transferred them on the evening of the 8th.

*American Legion*, with the rest of the amphibious ships of TF 62, then proceeded to Noumea, New Caledonia, which she reached on 13 August. Soon thereafter, she transferred her *Quincy* survivors to the auxiliary *Argonne* (AG-31) and the transport *Wharton* (AP-7).

Over the next several months, *American Legion* carried out a series of supply runs, including as ports of call Guadalcanal, Tulagi, Auckland, New Zealand; Noumea; Brisbane, Australia; and Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides. Arriving at Brisbane on New Year's Day 1943, she sailed soon thereafter for Melbourne, Australia; thence she proceeded to Tongatabu, Pago Pago, Espiritu Santo, and Guadalcanal. Early in this period, on 1 February 1943, the ship was reclassified to an attack transport, APA-17. She then carried out a series of training landings at Upolu, American Samoa, between 9 April and 10 May 1943, and then later at New Zealand, at Paikaiaiki, between 13 and 16 June. While there, a landing accident claimed the lives of one officer and nine enlisted men when one of *American Legion's* landing boats capsized in a heavy surf.

Troop and cargo runs then followed, between Auckland, New Zealand, Noumea, New Caledonia, and Guadalcanal, before she put into Efate, in the New Hebrides, on 22 October 1943, in preparation for the invasion of Bougainville, Solomon Islands.

Arriving off Cape Torokina, Bougainville, on the morning of 1 November 1943, *American Legion* proceeded into the earmarked transport area in Empress Augusta Bay and anchored at 0646. Japanese planes arriving in the vicinity prompted the ships to get underway, the transport's men observing Aichi D3A2 Type 99 carrier attack planes ("Vals") attacking nearby destroyers and losing two or three of their number in the process. "Zeke" (Mitsubishi A6M "Zero") fighters then strafed the beach area; sinking an LCPL from *American Legion*.

Securing from general quarters at 0937, *American Legion* anchored in the transport area a few moments later, observers on board noting beaches Red 2 and 3 littered with broached landing craft, 2 LCMs and four LCVPs from *American Legion* among them. Ordered to cease unloading off Beach Red 2 and to proceed to Beach Blue 3, the transport got underway and proceeded thence, soon noting the presence of shoal water. At 1246, the ship's war diary recounts "several slight shocks to hull" as *American Legion* grounded. Ten minutes later, enemy planes

were reported approaching, as the ship began using her engines in an attempt to work herself free of her predicament. While the other ships in the task unit got underway and stood out, *American Legion* remained fast aground. The ship, assisted in the effort by *Sioux* (AT-75) and *Apache* (AT-67), fired on "Vals" attacking the beachhead, and eventually worked free by 1506. After standing out to sea during the night, the transport returned to the transport area the following morning and completed discharging cargo.

Following the landings at Cape Torokina, *American Legion* returned to the United States via Pago Pago, Samoa, and reached San Francisco, on 8 December 1943, having traveled 83,140 miles since leaving New York the previous spring. She then underwent repairs at San Francisco into the spring of 1944.

Departing San Francisco on 12 April 1944, *American Legion* proceeded to San Diego where she became part of the Transport Training Division, Amphibious Training, Pacific. Based at the Amphibious Training Base at Coronado, Calif., *American Legion* operated in the training capacity for the duration of World War II, exercising off Coronado, off Aliso Canyon, near Ocean-side, Calif., and the Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, and at Pyramid Cove, near San Clemente Island.

Departing San Diego on 7 September 1945, *American Legion* proceeded to San Francisco, stopping there only briefly before sailing on 11 September for Pearl Harbor and Guam. Returning to San Pedro on 24 October 1945, *American Legion* sailed for her second Pacific voyage on 8 November, bound for the Philippines. After calling at Manila and Tacloban, the veteran transport returned to the United States, reaching San Francisco on 12 December 1945.

Clearing that port for the last time on 6 March 1946, she reached Olympia, Wash., on the 9th. She was decommissioned there on 28 March 1946 and was turned over to the War Shipping Administration for disposal. Her name was struck from the Naval Vessel Register the same day. She was ultimately sold for scrap on 5 February 1948 to Zidell Ship Dismantling Co., of Portland, Oregon.

*American Legion* was awarded two battle stars for her World War II service.

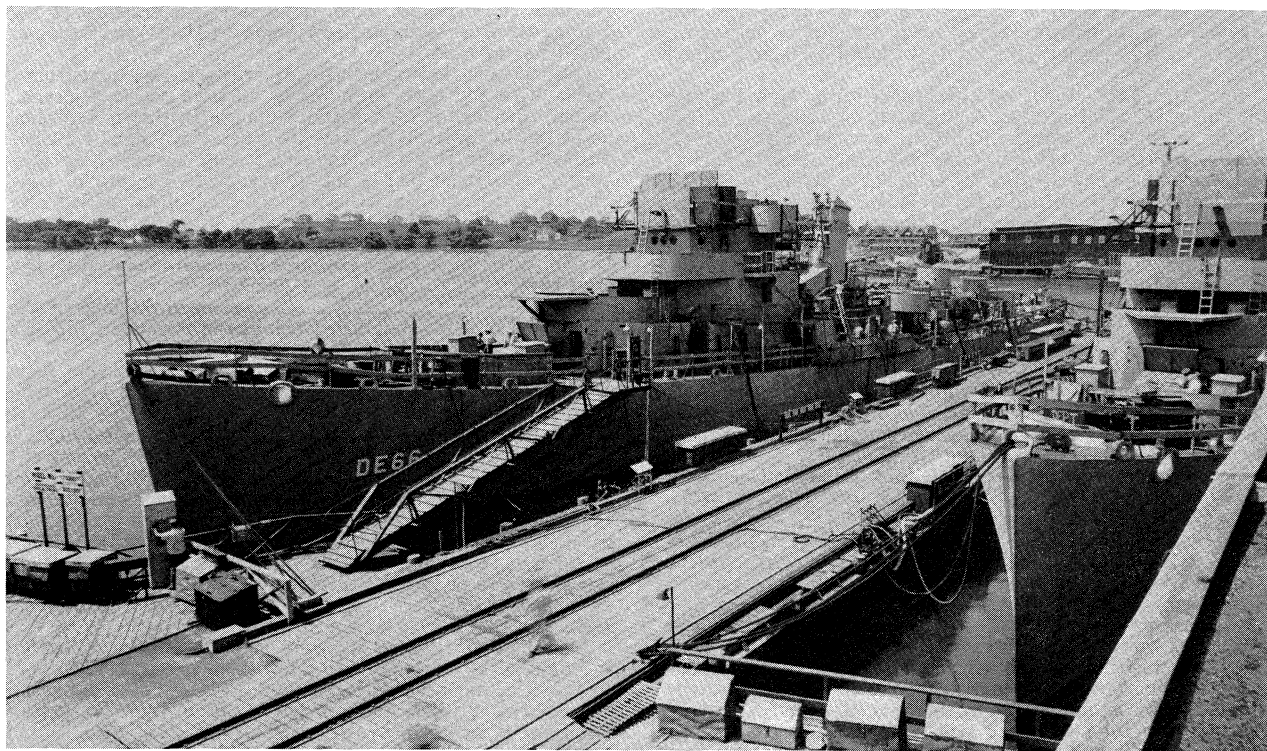
## Amesbury

Stanton Morgan Amesbury—born in Boston, Mass., on 17 January 1916—enlisted in the Naval Reserve as a seaman 2d class on 12 April 1941. After elimination flight training at Squantum, Mass., Amesbury was appointed aviation cadet, USNR, upon the termination of his enlistment on 11 June. After flight instruction at the naval air stations at Jacksonville and Miami, Fla., he was designated a naval aviator on 1 December 1941.

Commissioned as ensign, USNR, on 27 December 1941 and assigned to the Advanced Carrier Training Group, Atlantic Fleet, based at Norfolk, Va., "Stan" Amesbury was initially assigned to Fighter Squadron (VF) 71, attached to *Wasp* (CV-7). These orders were cancelled, however; and, instead, Amesbury ferried aircraft with the Atlantic Fleet Air Detachment until 28 April 1942. He was then assigned to VF-9, at East Field, Norfolk.

Lieutenant (jg.) Amesbury participated in the invasion of North Africa (Operation "Torch") flying with VF-9 off *Ranger* (CV-4). On 9 November, the second day of the landings, flying a Grumman F4F-4, he took off from *Ranger* at 1455 with flight B-20, to support American ground forces fighting near Port Lyautey. Led by VF-9's "skipper," Lt. Comdr. John Raby, the nine F4F-4s of the flight split into two sections. Raby took four down to low altitude to scout the road from Rabat to Port Lyautey while the remaining five flew top cover. Raby's section, with Amesbury in the "tail-end charlie" position, spotted fair game on the road between Port Lyautey and Petitjean and dove down to the attack. In the teeth of heavy antiaircraft fire, they strafed a column of trucks and tanks; but after the third or fourth pass, Amesbury's "Wildcat," 9-F-24, was hit by enemy fire, crashed, and exploded. Amesbury was buried at Port Lyautey but, after the war, his remains were returned to the United States and reinterred in the family's plot in Duxbury, Mass.

(DE-66: dp. 1,400; l. 306'; b. 37'; dr. 9'5" (mean); s. 23.5 k.; cpl. 186; a. 3 3", 4 1.1", 8 20mm., 2 dcl., 8 dep., 1 dep. (hh.); cl. *Buckley*)



*Amesbury* (DE-66) fits out at her builder's yard at Hingham, Mass., 6 July 1943, while an unidentified sister ship fits out at right. (19-N-85626)